DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 414 275 SP 037 679

AUTHOR Bates, Richard
TITLE Teaching Old Dogs New Tricks: On the Continuing Education of Teachers.
PUB DATE 1997-08-00
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the International Conference on Teacher Education in the Asia-Pacific Region (Beijing, China, August 1997).
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College School Cooperation; *Continuing Education; Educational Innovation; Educational Policy; Elementary School Teachers; Elementary Secondary Education; *Faculty Development; Foreign Countries; Government School Relationship; Higher Education; *Inservice Teacher Education; *Partnerships in Education; Preservice Teacher Education; Secondary School Teachers; Teacher Collaboration; *Teacher Improvement
IDENTIFIERS *Australia

ABSTRACT

The emergence of globalization and its impact on knowledge, communications, economies, social structures, and institutions such as education is rapidly changing the context, content, and methods of teachers' work. Consequently, the continuing professional development of teachers, especially in Australia with its aging teacher force, is essential. Though preservice education is the focus of much effort regarding changing teacher professional behavior, its impact may be limited because new recruits constitute a very small percentage of the profession. To encourage professional development, the Australian government launched a program in 1993 to construct a national framework for providing professional development. The program offered a general component administered by the states and a strategic initiatives element to be allocated in accordance with Commonwealth Government priorities. A 1995 review of the program suggested it was fairly successful. One of the most successful components of the program, Innovative Links between Universities and Schools for Teacher Professional Development, linked schools and universities in a roundtable to develop collaborative teacher projects. Various related projects produced innovative ways of linking schools and communities productively. Australia is developing a support structure for professional development that balances the priorities of the government, schools, and universities. (Contains 14 references). (SM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 414 275

Teaching Old Dogs New Tricks: On the Continuing Education of Teachers

Richard Bates
Deakin University
Australia, 3217
rbates@deakin.edu.au

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
R. Bates
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Paper presented to the International Conference on Teacher Education in the Asia-Pacific Region, Beijing Normal University, August 1997.

SP037179

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Teaching Old Dogs New Tricks: On the Continuing Education Of Teachers

Abstract

The emergence of globalisation and its impact on knowledge, communications, economies, social structures and institutions such as Education is rapidly changing the context, content and methods of teachers work. As a consequence, the continuing professional development of teachers, especially in countries such as Australia which has an aging teaching force, is of paramount importance. This paper explores some of the barriers and some of the possibilities for effective continuing education of teachers.

The emergence of the global economy and the major restructuring of national economies that is associated with it has created a significant alteration in the environment of education systems in both developed and developing worlds. As Horshman and Marshall (1994) have observed these changes are directly the result of the "...enormous increase in the scale, scope and number of communications technologies [whose] impact on the military, financial, industrial and cultural spheres...has revolutionised not only what we perceive but how we perceive" (p268). The impact on the nation state has been immense. While previously nations could maintain considerable control over their borders, supervising and shaping flows of information, money, technology, goods and people, the trends towards globalisation undermine such control. One of the results is to set nation states in fierce competition with each other for capital, technology, information, and, perhaps most important, jobs which are being redistributed on a global scale. When combined with global crises of exploding population and environmental degradation and the effects of the massively unequal distribution of resource consumption, differences between the scale of global challenges and the resources of nation states produce a very unstable situation.

Brown and Lauder summarise the situation as follows with reference to western societies:

> Since the first oil shock in the early 1970s western societies have experienced a social, political and economic transformation that is yet to reach its conclusion. At its epicentre is the creation of a global economy that has led to an intensification of economic competition between firms, regions and nation states. This Globalisation of economic activity has called into question the future role of the nation state and how it can secure economic growth and shared prosperity.
>
> (1996:1)

In OECD countries in particular, one of the major reflexes has been to blame education systems for their 'failure' to equip the young for this dramatically changed world and to seek to restructure education systems to produce higher levels of general education, employability, productivity and innovation in the belief that national competitiveness is directly affected by the performance of education systems.

Despite evidence that schools have been outperforming the economy (Berliner and Biddle, 1995), rising levels of youth unemployment in Western economies are still blamed by employers and governments on the perceived 'inadequacies' of education systems. One consequence is that education policy has become a major issue in recent declarations of

priorities such as President Clinton's State of the Union address and Prime Minister Blair's election policy.

The major thrust of such policies is to improve performance either without increasing expenditure or by transferring the costs of increased performance onto the 'users' of the education system through private contributions or through direct privatisation or the transfer of students from fully funded government systems to partially funded private schools and universities. This is certainly the case in Australia where students in universities are now paying the highest fees of any publicly funded universities in the western world, incurring liabilities of tens of thousands of dollars which must subsequently be paid back through the taxation system when they gain employment. Within the school system Federal Government 'new schools' policy actively encourages the establishment of private non-government schools and the transfer of significant funds away from government towards non-government schools.

There has also been a move towards increasing the proportion of schooling conducted by non-government agencies. Governments have also been both de-regulating and re-regulating educational services. On the one hand, there has been significant de-regulation or 'devolution' of responsibility for individual school management within government systems. This is especially so in New Zealand and Australia, but also the case in England. School managers - both principals and governors- have had significant responsibilities put upon their shoulders for the efficient management of financial and staffing matters.

These responsibilities have been established within a marked change in context: firstly through a significant decline in resources and secondly through the introduction of competition policy which pits local schools against each other for pupil recruitment. The ideological basis of this policy is that competition for pupils and resources brings about improvement in school performance and that the failure of some schools to perform will lead to their closure thus leaving only the best in the system. This is seen as a mechanism for improving the overall performance of the remaining system. Despite significant research evidence that such policies simply exacerbate differences between schools to the greater disadvantage of the already disadvantaged without leading to the closure of schools that have become even more inadequate through resource starvation, the policy continues.

However, while the policy of de-regulation continues it is accompanied by policies of re-regulation which impose significantly tighter controls over what is to be taught, how it is to

be taught and how it shall be assessed. In New Zealand, Australia and England the hurried development of a centrally prescribed 'national curriculum' has been accompanied by systems of state or nation wide curricular advice and testing. These developments have been largely arbitrary and hugely controversial from an academic and educational point of view and have come under sustained attack from the educational profession and from academics attempting to defend intellectual rigour in their disciplines.

The imposition of such demands is much more of a managerial tool than an educational process. The introduction of these mechanisms attempts to shape and control the work of teachers and produce predictable curricular and educational outcomes which will supposedly tighten the links between educational achievement, employability and economic renewal. There is little evidence that such policies will succeed. Indeed, in Australia and New Zealand, as elsewhere, the introduction of such policies has been accompanied by reductions in retention rates among secondary school youth, accompanied by increases in youth unemployment. One of the by-products of this situation in Australia is the recent decision of the Commonwealth Government to withdraw unemployment allowances from school age youth in order to force young people back into school.

Clearly policies of managerial change in education based upon the ideas of de-regulation and competition on the one hand and re-regulation of curriculum and assessment on the other are a technical/managerial solution to the issue of school improvement and renewal. They are also prescriptions that are severely at odds with the professionally based forms of school improvement previously current in schools. School based professional development has had widespread support in Australia and was one of the sources of school improvement and achievement cited by Berliner and Biddle in their defence of the record of America's schools. The shift towards competency based forms of education advocated widely in education during the late 1980's challenges such school based professionally oriented school improvement. As Jackson (1993) suggests, the introduction of the language of competency based education and training is 'part of an increasingly uniform management discourse being applied across national boundaries to fields of public social provision including education, health, and welfare, as part of their articulation to market forces' (p159).

Schools are feeling the weight of such ideas in the shaping of their curriculum, the nature and intrusiveness of external state-wide testing and the consequent shaping of their pedagogy. Teachers are having their traditional notions of professionalism challenged in

ways which suggest that non-compliance with the current managerial agenda is 'unprofessional' despite the fact that it cuts against the grain of the experience of most of their professional lives (Jackson 1993; Goodson and Hargreaves, 1996).

While schools are a major focus of such managerial reforms other institutions are also feeling their weight. For instance pre-service teacher education is coming under scrutiny in many countries in relation to the competencies developed during such initial programs. Highly specific guidelines for such programs are being developed such as that developed in New Zealand where the New Zealand Qualifications Authority has specified 'Qualifications Standards for Education in Teaching' (Gibbs and Munro 1993). These standards are unitised and highly specific and run to some 88 pages of detail. In England attempts are being made to combine such tight specification of desired competencies with an apprenticeship model of teacher education which locates initial teacher education within schools. In Australia a somewhat different specification of Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education is being developed which has a much broader and more general framework and which recognises Porter's (1993) assertion that 'Teaching is not one job, but many'.

But while Initial Teacher Education is the focus of much effort in terms of changing teacher professional behaviour, its impact is likely to be quite limited. This is firstly because new recruits constitute a very small percentage of the profession. For instance in the Australian teacher population of some 220,000 only between 5,000 (1997) and 8,000 (2002) are recent graduate recruits. Secondly, such new recruits are unlikely to be in a position of authority within the profession. Thirdly, it is beginning teachers (under age thirty) who have the highest resignation rates (Preston, 1997). The vast majority of the profession in Australia is between 40 to 50 years old. This is also the group with the lowest separation rate although from mid-fifties onwards the separation rate again increases significantly. Similar patterns exist in comparable countries (England, New Zealand the United States).

It is also the case that teachers in this middle age range are the most likely to be undertaking professional development or further education of some kind. According to the Schools Council (1990) 22.8% of Australian teachers were enrolled in formal degree programs upgrading their qualifications. In addition over one third of Australian teachers were undertaking some form of non-degree professional development. In 1990 the preponderance of this professional development was school based (41%) or conducted in regional offices (19%) or by subject/professional associations (14%) (Schools Council 1990).

In order to encourage such professional development activities the Commonwealth Government launched a major program of support in 1993 which attempted to construct a national framework for the coherent provision of professional development opportunities which provided a balance between:

- meeting individual teacher's needs and goals over a teaching career
- meeting school and system needs and objectives and
- improving learning outcomes consistent with agreed national goals

(DEET, 1993)

The centre piece of subsequent government policy was the commitment of sixty million dollars over three years for a National Professional Development Program for practising teachers. This program was to be divided into two parts. The first was a general component administered through the States. The second was a Strategic Initiatives element which was to be allocated in accord with Commonwealth Government priorities. The overall objectives were to improve educational outcomes for young people by fostering professional development activities which

- facilitate the use of the Curriculum Statements and Profiles for Australian Schools, Key Competencies and the teaching of accredited vocational education courses in schools

- assist the renewal of teachers' discipline knowledge and teaching skills and help teachers to improve work organisation practices and teaching competencies within schools

- enhance the professional culture of teachers and encourage teacher organisations to take a higher profile in promoting the professional development of teachers and

- promote partnerships between education authorities, teacher organisations and universities in the provision of professional development opportunities for teachers.

(NPDP 1995)

In a mid term review of the National Professional Development Program (NPDP) in September 1995 a national conference concluded that from the Government's perspective the use of the grant money as seeding money for projects had been very successful (NEF 1995). In particular the commitment and contribution of other partners in the various projects, state departments, teacher subject and professional associations, universities, had enhanced the objectives and reach of the program to the point where in the first twelve months some 50,000 (25%) of Australian teachers had participated in various programs. Moreover, the research capacity of universities had been used well in schools where many projects centered around the identification of issues for examination in schools, a jointly conceived research project and subsequent monitoring of intervention and change.

One of the most successful forms of professional development under this program was the program called Innovative Links Between Universities and Schools for Teacher Professional Development. This was a program where a number of schools were linked with each other and with a university in a 'roundtable'. Roundtable participants worked together to develop collaborative teacher initiated and directed projects within schools with the support of the local university. Fourteen universities at sixteen campuses Australia wide, in metropolitan and country areas comprising one third of Australian Universities took part. These roundtables were linked together and circulated information about particular projects as well as providing a network of contacts and regional and national meetings to share innovations and experience. It was a nice mixture of local initiative, academic support and regional and national networking which sustained teachers capacity to innovate with confidence.

The Innovative Links project also sponsored similar forms of self examination in Teacher Education with, for instance, a conference on Emerging Issues in Teacher Education in 1995. This conference produced a useful assessment of trends and issues in teacher education in the United Kingdom and the United States as well as in Australia and New Zealand (Gore,1995).

While the Innovative Links Project focussed on curricular and pedagogical reform another national project, the National Schools Network, fostered collaboration between schools, state departments of education and universities in the development of alternative forms of school organisation. Here the regulations governing the work of schools were set aside by mutual agreement with the employers and unions in order to experiment with innovative

forms of school organisation which might provide a basis for a national reform agenda. Several of these projects have produced innovative ways of linking schools and communities in very productive ways changing not only the formal structures of the school in terms of time, curriculum, assessment, resources and leadership but also producing quite significant changes in school culture. Accompanying research projects which monitored many of these developments stressed the importance of educational leadership (as against a limited focus on managerial responsibilities) and cultural change which developed participation and collaboration between all members o the school community.

Teacher Professional Subject Associations were also strongly supported by the NPDP which encouraged such associations to take the lead in implementation of change in curriculum areas, in across the curriculum initiatives and in the introduction of information technology in ways which were informed by good pedagogical practice. Such associations regularly used the available funds to establish programs whereby leading edge teachers shared their expertise with others. Through such programs teacher professional development opportunities became very often teacher led.

Universities also participated in networks which organised teacher professional development as well as producing extremely useful surveys of literature and best practice such as the Computers Across the Curriculum project undertaken by the Victorian Deans of Education (Sullivan, 1996).

In addition to this flowering of opportunities for teacher professional development the inevitable question of the relationship between short term professional development and long term credentialled programs arose. Many of the opportunities for professional development outlined above involved very considerable effort of a very disciplined kind. Much of the work involved careful investigation monitoring and reporting of innovations. It was not unreasonable therefore for teacher representatives to argue that "Teacher learning is an essential work practice and must be credentialled' (Burrow, in Retallick and Groundwater Smith, 1996). Several approaches to such credentialling have been proposed. Retallick and Groundwater Smith in New South Wales have, for instance, suggested that teachers might develop a learning portfolio which provides documentation of learning undertaken during professional development projects which can be submitted to a university for the award of partial credit towards and appropriate credential.

In Victoria a somewhat different arrangement is being negotiated whereby the Ministry of Education, the universities and the teacher professional subject associations are negotiating an agreed framework for the delivery and formal recognition of professional development programs. Here agreement has been reached on the duration, appropriate level of performance, assessment, and other matters relating to the offering of a modular professional development program within which universities would recognise for partial credit the successful completion professional development modules offered by any of the universitiesparty to the framework.

What seems to be emerging in Australia is a support structure for professional development which is professionally based and provides a reasonable balance between the priorities of teachers, systems, schools and universities. The aim of such professional development programs is clearly to support and encourage appropriate investigation and reform in schools with regard to all those matters which facilitate student learning. Within this framework there are clear elements of the determination of governments to steer education in their preferred direction of economic reform but also strong elements of teacher professionalism based upon their assessments of pedagogical, social and cultural needs, as well as an element of university based support for rigorous enquiry and evaluation of educational practice.

It may be that such a program is not able only to teach old dogs new tricks, but also enable them to learn new tricks from each other and ensure that only the best tricks are passed on. Whether it will make a difference to educational outcomes sufficient to remedy problems in international economic competition is another question altogether.

References

Berliner, D.C. and Diddle, B.J. (1995) The manufactured crisis: Myths, fraud and attack on America's public schools. New York. Addison-Wesley-Longman.

Brown, P and Lauder, H (1966) Education, Globalisation and economic development. J Educational Policy 11(1) 1-25

DEET (1993) Teacher Education Discussion Paper. Canberra. Department of Employment, Education and Training.

Goodson, Ivor and Hargreaves, Andy (eds) (1996) Teachers Professional Lives. London. Falmer Press.

Gore, Jennifer (1995) Emerging Issues in Teacher Education. Murdoch, West Australia. Innovative Links Project.

Horsman, M and Marshall, A (1994) After the Nation State. London. Harper Collins.

Jackson, Nancy (1993) Competence: a game of smoke and mirrors? pp 154-161 in Competencies: the competencies debate in Australian education and training. Canberra. Australian College of Education.

Kennedy, Paul (1993) Preparing for the Twenty-First Century. London. Harper/Collins.

NEF (1995) National Professional Development Program: Mid Term Review. Canberra. National Education Forum.

NPDP (1995) National Professional Development Program Guidelines. Canberra. National Professional Development Program.

Porter, Paige (1993) Standards versus standardisation pp 111-121 in J Knight, L Bartlett and E McWilliam (eds) Unfinished Business: reshaping the teacher education industry for the 1990s. Rockhampton University of Central Queensland Press.

Preston, Barbara (1997) Teacher Supply and Demand to 2003. Canberra. Australian Council of Deans of Education.

Retallick, J and Groundwater-Smith, S (1996) The Advancement of Teacher Workplace Learning. Wagga Wagga, Australia. Charles Sturt University.

Sullivan, Peter (1997) Computers Across the Curriculum. Melbourne. Victorian Council of Deans of Education.